



UNDERSTANDING HERNIA

Don't Ignore the Signs & Symptoms

A hernia occurs when an organ or fatty tissue squeezes through a weak spot in a surrounding muscle or connective tissue called fascia. Those affected by hernia may be born with a weakness there, or the weakness may develop over time later in life.

A hernia developing in the abdomen is extremely common. Babies, children, and adults get them. Most of the time, hernias are found in men over 40.

Anything that causes an increase in pressure in the abdomen can cause a hernia, including:

- » Lifting heavy objects without

stabilizing the abdominal muscles

- » Diarrhea or constipation
- » Persistent coughing or sneezing

In addition, obesity, poor nutrition, and smoking, can all weaken muscles and make hernias more likely.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?

The majority—three-quarters—of abdominal wall hernias are in the groin (the groin region is the lower abdomen). The first sign of a hernia is a small bulge from the lower abdomen. You may notice it only

when you stand up, cough, jump, or strain. That's because those activities increase the pressure within your abdomen. That increased pressure can make a part of your intestine pop out of an area of weakness. When you lie down, the bulge may go away.

WHAT ARE THE TREATMENTS?

If you think you may have a hernia, ask your doctor. A doctor can usually detect a hernia during a physical exam. Your doctor can rule out other conditions that cause bulges or lumps.

If the bulge is very soft, your doctor

may be able to massage the intestine back into the abdomen. A small, soft hernia that does not cause pain may not need treatment right away. The doctor may suggest watching and waiting for changes, like pain, to develop. If a hernia is painful or large, your doctor may suggest you see a surgeon for advice. You may need surgery to repair the hernia.

If your doctor can't massage the intestine back into the abdomen, that means it's trapped. A trapped intestine is dangerous because its blood supply can be cut off or strangulated. A strangulated hernia can be very serious and even life

threatening. Symptoms include severe pain that doesn't go away, nausea, and vomiting.

Surgery is usually needed if the intestine is trapped—and emergency surgery if it's strangulated. A hernia is one of the most common reasons for surgery in the United States. It's a successful and low-risk procedure done hundreds of thousands of times a year in the United States.

If you think you may have a hernia, talk with your doctor. Keep in mind that anyone with sudden pain in the groin should immediately seek medical help.

If you have a hernia, try to keep it from getting worse:

- » Avoid heavy lifting when you can. Lifting puts stress on the groin.
- » When you must lift, don't bend over. Lift objects by using the legs, not the back.
- » Eat high-fiber foods and drink plenty of water. This helps prevent constipation and straining during bowel movements.
- » Maintain a healthy body weight.



Source: <https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2017/12/battling-bulging-hernia>